

NEWS RELEASE
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office
1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, ID 83709

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carmen Thomas, 208-378-5243

**PROPOSED CONSERVATION EFFORTS TO BENEFIT THE COLUMBIAN SPOTTED FROG
IN OWYHEE COUNTY, IDAHO**

Public Comment Period Open through March 3, 2006

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced the release today of a proposed Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for the Columbian spotted frog at Sam Noble Springs, Owyhee County, Idaho, for public review and comment. The Service also released a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the proposed Agreement.

The State of Idaho (Idaho Department of Lands and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game) has developed the proposed CCAA in cooperation with the Service, and is applying for a section 10(a)1(A) permit under the Endangered Species Act (Act), authorizing incidental take of the species.

The Agreement covers approximately 680 acres at Sam Noble Springs in the upper Rock Creek drainage in Owyhee County, Idaho, and conservation measures are proposed for 104 acres. The enrolled lands are wholly-owned State of Idaho lands, managed by the Idaho Department of Lands. The term of the Agreement would be 22 years.

“By implementing the proposed CCAA for the Columbia spotted frog, the State of Idaho may help ensure long-term protection of a candidate species by significantly reducing the risk of impacts to frog habitat, as well as improving spotted frog habitat,” said Jeff Foss, Field Supervisor the Service’s Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office. “This proposed Agreement would allow the State of Idaho and the Service to work cooperatively toward successful conservation of this species in the Owyhees.”

Columbia spotted frogs at Sam Noble Springs are part of the Great Basin population of frogs that became a candidate for listing under ESA in 1993. Columbia spotted frogs in Idaho occur in Owyhee and Twin Falls Counties.

The proposed CCAA-enrolled lands are currently occupied year-round by Columbia spotted frogs. The springs at Sam Noble are affected by seasonal increases and decreases in flow due to drought, snow pack, weather conditions, and water withdrawal. The species may be impacted by loss of habitat, including the loss of perennial wetlands used for feeding, breeding, hibernating, and migrating. Livestock grazing and water use in areas where frogs occur may contribute to habitat loss.

Conservation measures on the Sam Noble Springs parcel would include habitat improvement, livestock grazing management practices, and revegetation. Population and vegetation monitoring would also be conducted to assist the agencies in determining the effectiveness of the proposed Agreement.

Under a CCAA, participating landowners voluntarily implement conservation activities on their property to benefit species that are proposed for listing under the Act or other sensitive species. These Agreements encourage private and other non-federal property owners to implement conservation efforts and reduce threats to unlisted species. In return, the landowner receives assurances that they will not be subjected to increased property use restrictions beyond those identified in the Agreement if the species is listed in the future under the Act.

The Service is soliciting public review and comments on the proposed CCAA and EA. Written comments should be received on or before close of business on March 3, 2006. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be released to the public.

Comments may be submitted in writing to: Carmen Thomas, Project Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709.

Comments may also be faxed to 208-378-5262 or e-mailed to fwlsrbocomment@fws.gov. Please include “Spotted Frog Comments” in the title line for faxes and e-mails, with the name and address of the person submitting comments included in the message. If our Internet connection is disrupted, please submit your comments by mail or fax to the contact office above.

The proposed CCAA and EA are available for download at the Service’s Snake River Fish and Wildlife website: <http://idahoes.fws.gov>. Copies of the documents will also be available for inspection, by appointment during normal business hours, at the above address. For further information, please contact Carmen Thomas at 208-378-5243.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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